

Right Understanding for the Liberation

The Buddha's message that leads to get rid of unsatisfactoriness and achieve real happiness is very clear. It is well expounded (*Svākkhāto*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akālika*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Vinnuhi*). To achieve final bliss of liberation, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge, and we have to reflect on that knowledge through our life.

At the very first level in Buddhism the knowledge is very important. Buddhism compares knowledge as wealth (*Suta Dhanam*). To achieve all kinds of results such as wisdom that Buddhism teaches knowledge plays a major role. It is not only that knowledge is enough but reflecting on it again and again is also very important. Furthermore, we have to practice it in our daily life as morality (*Seela*) and meditation (*Bhavana*) to see the results. All doctrines that focus on liberation what we should practice can be included in three steps, those are discipline, tranquility and wisdom. According to our knowledge and comprehension what the Buddha analyzed, gradually we go forward practicing these three steps seeing the final bliss of liberation.

Buddhism explains the reality or truth what happens to the world which relates to our mind and body. The truth that Buddhism illuminates is not a creation of the Buddha. It is a discovery that the Buddha exposed by himself. This truth is forever whether a Buddha appears or not in the world. We respect the Buddha and name this message as Buddhism because the Buddha discovered it himself and he explained it to the world kindly. Nevertheless this truth doesn't belong even to the Buddha. The truth that the Buddha expounded can be divided into two steps. One of them is the conventional truth. It is described as mundane or ordinary level. The second truth is the ultimate truth. According to the conventional truth, before we were born, it was a world. And also after we die, the world remains. The conventional truth can be seen in other religions and philosophies too, but the ultimate truth is only in Buddhism. It is the identity of Buddhism. According to the ultimate truth the world arises when our senses arise. And also the world ceases when our senses cease. This truth represents the impermanence. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is the impermanence, *Anicca*. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence** (අනුත්ථවා සම්භවං භුත්ථවා න භවිස්සති). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illuminates. The impermanence is described in Buddhism according to the dependent origination (*Paticca Samuppāda*)

Both of above truths focus on getting intelligence or wisdom. The main reason how far we have overcome suffering depends on how far we have achieved wisdom. Because of that Buddhism always gives the priority to understand wisdom and develop it as much as we can. When we practice the

Buddha's message, wisdom, which causes us to overcome suffering, gradually increases. Wisdom (or Right Understanding - *Sammā Ditthi*) that Buddhism explains can be divided into two. The first step of intelligence is the understanding of the karmic law. Here we have a clear knowledge about the Karmic force that when we do some activities with wicked mind, we will have the bad results because of polluted mind. Furthermore, when we do something with pure mind, we will have the fruitful results because of pure mind. When somebody has this knowledge, he doesn't like to suffer doing bad deeds with wicked mind. He always tries to get rid of bad deeds and develop good deeds with pure mind in the name of real happiness. He does these things not only for happiness of next birth, but in this life itself. This intelligent person always practices generosity, virtue and meditation as much as he can .

The second step of intelligence is the understanding of cause and effect (*Paticca-samuppāda*), The Dependent Origination. This is the main theme or the unique teaching in Buddhism. We get experience through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose When we see, hear or smell something, it means five aggregates (Forms, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness) arise together and cease at the moment. Nothing comes to the present from the past, nothing goes to the future from the present. At the moment it arises and ceases. This is the world reality according to ultimate truth whether we like or not, and whether we know or not. Unknowing or ignorance of cause and effect is the main cause of suffering. If somebody has this knowledge, he tries to overcome suffering practicing the Buddha's message. He may find the path to this goal. The path of purification is the Noble Eight Fold Path. For the real happiness and getting rid of suffering this is the only path.

1. Right Understanding (*Sammā ditti*)

The main cause of suffering is ignorance or delusion (*Avijjā*). If we like to overcome suffering or unsatisfactoriness, we have to reduce ignorance. Right understanding is the opposite of ignorance. As much as we listen to the Buddha's message and reflect on it, we can develop right understanding. This understanding causes us to go on the path getting rid of suffering towards the final goal.

When we practice the path that leads to purity of our mind, we should have correct knowledge about the world and ourselves. As it is mentioned before, the first step of right understanding is the confidence of karmic law, as believing in Karma. It means when we do good deeds with pure mind, we will have the good results and when we do bad deeds with wicked mind, we will have the bad results because of polluted mind. The second step of right understanding is the understanding of dependent origination. It means understanding of impermanence. That is; when conditions are together, the experience arises and when the conditions cease, the experience also ceases. According to this view, the impermanence which is taught in Buddhism is the understanding of arising and ceasing of our experience through our senses. If someone has this understanding, he puts an earnest to purify his mind from negative thoughts because he doesn't like to suffer any more. He continues to the second step.

2. Right Thoughts (*Sammā samkappa*)

According to right understanding, further we are not ready to suffer. That is why we are going to purify our mind from unwholesome or negative thoughts such as desire and hatred. We are always sensitive and watchful when the thoughts come to our mind whether they are good or bad. Here, we know very well that when negative thoughts such as anger, desire, jealousy, etc. come to our mind, we suffer or worry. And when positive thoughts such as kindness, friendliness, compassion, generosity, etc. come to our mind, our mind is pure, calm, quiet, peaceful and happy. That is why we always try to live with right thoughts because of right understanding.

3. Right Speech (*Sammā vācā*)

Then he goes towards the path. Now he is ready to control his speech too. When he tells something, he reflects on it again and again whether it is correct or not. Here he avoids false, backbiting, rush and rubbish words for the sake of happiness. He practices the discipline in speech. He always protects the consistency of speech in all his life.

4. Right Action (*Sammā kammanta*)

He has not only verbal discipline but he has behavioral discipline as well. Here he abstains from stealing, killing others and having sexual misconduct. Because of right understanding, he knows very well, when he has those bad actions, he has to face the inevitable consequences and knows how it leads to more suffering in the long-run.

5. Right Livelihood (*Sammā ājiva*)

Further he goes on the path of satisfactoriness. He engages in right livelihood and always attempts to do righteous jobs leaving wrong jobs such as killing animals, selling drugs and poisons. As the result of these good activities his happiness gradually increases. Because of right understanding, he practices his correct knowledge for all his activities. He never forgets his spiritual goals even though he lives in complex and difficult situations, because he always lives in righteous way with right understanding.

6. Right Effort (*Sammā vāyāmā*)

And his courage develops to do good and to get rid of bad. Especially, here we make sure not to give rise to bad deeds that are not yet arisen in us, and try to give up bad things that already we do. Further, we try to initiate good things that we haven't started yet and try to keep developing good that we are already doing. It means we are on the way to happiness.

7. Right Mindfulness (*Sammā sati*)

Here he does all his activities with mindfulness. He knows very well that when he loses his mindfulness, he loses his happiness. Therefore he always does everything mindfully and reflects on his feelings, mind and mental formations with awareness. Mindfulness in Buddhism is a major quality that we have to practice. And it is the center of all kinds of spiritual factors. All kinds of doctrines in Buddhism can be included into mindfulness. Mindfulness is divided into four as;

- The contemplation of body (*Kāyānupassanā*)
- The contemplation of feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
- The contemplation of mind (*Cittānupassanā*)
- The contemplation of mental formations (*Dhammānupassanā*)

8. Right Tranquility or Concentration (*Sammā samādhi*)

Furthermore, practicing his mind by meditation, he always tries to keep his mind away from defilements such as desire, anger and delusion. Here, he is clever to keep his mind for a long time with wholesome thoughts. His mind is pure, calm and quite like clear water in a well.

With this concentrated mind he reflects on the impermanence, suffering and egolessness (or selflessness) again and again. The understanding of three characteristics of existence grows up every moment when we are on the path to purification. As the result of practicing this correct path, gradually he reaches the ultimate liberation of the mind. And he reaches other two steps too which are '**the right knowledge of suffering**' (*Sammā Nana*) and '**the right liberation of suffering**' (*Sammā Vimukti*).' When we are on this path, we can see the results in our life that we are growing up with honesty, loving kindness and wisdom. If we are on the real path of purification, day by day, moment by moment we are going forward on these eight fold path. It means, avoiding suffering we are reaching to liberation and happiness.

The Buddha explains that this is the direct path, this is the noble path, and this is the real path to cease from suffering, sorrow, sickness, death, old age and lamentation. If we are intelligent, honest, kind for beings and have faith in the Buddha's enlightenment, we can go along this path. As the result of going on this path our senses develop. Buddhism always pays attention about skillfulness of senses. When we practice our mind in the impermanence, our ability to reflect on every object comes to senses at the present moment and it ceases at the moment without remaining anything. This comprehension releases us from suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Also, we can gradually reach the real happiness that nobody can steal or destroy, and nobody can bring suffering to us.

May The Triple Gem Bless you!

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